

SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATOR KARA HAHN



FIFTH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

PRESS RELEASE

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Hahn's Policies Will Enforce Orders of Protection Using GPS Monitoring; Probation Will Monitor Offender to Safeguard Victims

*Citing a double-digit increase in intimate partner homicides across New York,
Hahn says new measure is necessary to improve victim safety & save lives.*

Hauppauge, NY – On Tuesday, the Suffolk County Legislature is expected to unanimously pass a pair of initiatives sponsored by Legislator Kara Hahn (D-Setauket) that will protect victims of domestic violence from high risk offenders who violate orders of protection through the use of Global Positioning System (GPS) technology and with proximity detectors never before used in Suffolk County. These are the latest in a series of policy initiatives sponsored by Legislator Hahn to transform the way domestic violence incidents are handled in Suffolk. The bills are designed to work in tandem with legislation unanimously approved last month that provides law enforcement and victims with danger assessment tools that objectively identify high risk offenders. During 2013 alone, there were more than 1,500 violations of orders of protection in Suffolk according to the NYS Division of Criminal Justice.

A newly established Domestic Violence Monitoring Pilot Program administered by the Suffolk County Department of Probation will make GPS units available for electronic monitoring of respondents in the Family Court system who are subject to a “stay away” order of protection for a family offense and pose a continuing threat to the physical

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safety of the victim or the victim's children. Suffolk County District Attorney Thomas Spota will acquire these units using asset forfeiture funds and the cost of monitoring will be paid for by the offender. The two bills mirror one another in policy, but are specific to criminal (Introductory Resolution 1373) and family courts (Introductory Resolution 1374).

"Domestic violence can and does escalate, and many victims live in constant fear of being attacked without warning. This technology will alert victims if their abusers are nearer than their order of protection allows, giving them a chance to take immediate proactive safety measures for themselves and their children," said Legislator Hahn. "Recent statistics prove intimate partner homicide is on the rise. That's just not acceptable. We must act more aggressively to protect victims."

Hahn's measure, references the following additional statistics:

- Despite the total number of homicides decreasing statewide between 2012 and 2013, the number of intimate partner homicides actually rose by 16%;
- During 2013, there were more than 7,500 incidents of domestic violence in Suffolk County, with over 4,000 of those between intimate partners, according to NYS Division of Criminal Justice; and
- Domestic Violence accounted for 21% of ALL violent victimizations nationwide during 2012 according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics.

"I have every confidence this pilot program will be successful in effectively protecting victims of domestic violence," said District Attorney Spota.

Legislator Monica Martinez echoed that sentiment, "Today marks a great day of progress for residents in Suffolk County. I applaud my colleague, Legislator Hahn, for her initiative in taking another step forward in the fight against domestic violence.

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Domestic violence affects individuals, children, family and others who witness this form of abuse. As a former educator, I understand the importance of creating safe and nurturing environments for our children so that they may grow and reach their fullest potential. This Bill will bring us a little closer towards that goal. I believe that through this legislation, Legislator Hahn, myself and all of the other co-sponsors have sent a clear message to perpetrators... Suffolk County will protect its residents from abusers. This dual initiative that uses technology and collaboration through our law enforcement will bring an enhanced level of safety to our residents and reduce intimate partner crimes in Suffolk County."

According to Patrice Dlhopsky, Director of the Suffolk County Department of Probation, the department "has employed Global Positioning Devices for the past nine years to track the movements of offenders with GPS monitoring conditions of probation. During this time, Probation has monitored a number of Domestic Violence cases of both sentenced probationers and pre-trial defendants. These resolutions extend our ability to offer that monitoring, on a pilot basis, to Family Court judges who may wish to impose GPS monitoring as a condition of a stay-away Order of Protection while increasing the number of those supervised in Criminal Court. Probation is actively investigating the use of proximity detectors which would alert the victim if an offender comes within a specified distance. The Probation Department continues to pursue all technologies and methods which have the ability to enhance the safety of crime victims."

Advocates today applauded Hahn's multi-dimensional approach saying such monitoring measures are needed to save lives. Laura Ahearn, Executive Director of the Crime Victim Center at Parents for Megan's Law concurred saying that, "The cycle of

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domestic violence will not be broken by the status quo. We must apply every tool at our disposal to keep victims safe, including the latest technology. The employment of electronic monitoring devices on certain domestic violence offenders can mean the difference between safety and tragedy."

"In my experience as a federal prosecutor, GPS devices serve as a real deterrent. In the moment of passion, an offender often thinks twice before reoffending when he knows he is being monitored by law enforcement," said Tim Sini, Assistant Deputy Suffolk County Executive. "I want to thank Legislator Hahn for once again fighting for victims of domestic violence in Suffolk County."

According to Hahn, "in March, the United Nations released a report on domestic violence that finds violence against women and girls remains high worldwide. If Suffolk County is to be a place where women and girls feel safe, we must lead the way, but with a 16% increase in homicides by an intimate partner, we have a long way to go before we claim victory. Implementing GPS to enforce orders of protection is a critical step."

The bill will be considered by the full Suffolk County Legislature on Tuesday, May 12th.

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